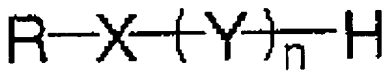
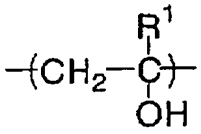
WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

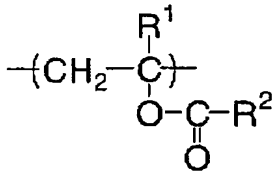
1. An ink-jet recording ink, comprising a pigment and a compound represented by the following General formula (I):

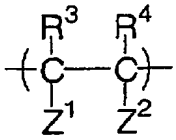


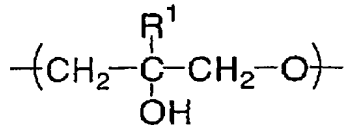
General formula (I)

wherein in General formula (I), R represents a hydrophobic group, or a group derived from a hydrophobic polymer; X represents a bivalent linking group having a hetero bond; n is an integer from 10 to 3500; and structural units of repeated Y comprise at least one structural unit represented by A, C or D, and further comprise 0 to 40% by mole of structural units represented by B:

A : 

B : 

C : 

D : 

wherein in structural units A through D, R^1 represents a hydrogen atom or an alkyl group having 1 to 6 carbon atoms; R^2 represents a hydrogen atom or an alkyl group having 1 to 10 carbon atoms; R^3 represents a hydrogen atom or a methyl group; R^4 represents a hydrogen atom, $-CH_3$, $-CH_2COOH$ or an ammonium salt thereof or alkali metal salt thereof, or –CN; Z^1 represents a hydrogen atom, –COOH or an ammonium salt thereof or alkali metal salt thereof, or $-CONH_2$; and Z^2 represents –COOH or an ammonium salt thereof or alkali metal salt thereof, $-SO_3H$ or an ammonium salt thereof or alkali metal salt thereof, $-OSO_3H$ or an ammonium salt thereof or alkali metal salt thereof, $-CH_2SO_3H$ or an ammonium salt thereof or alkali metal salt thereof, $-CONHC(CH_3)_2CH_2SO_3H$ or an ammonium salt thereof or alkali metal salt thereof, or $-CONHCH_2CH_2CH_2N^+(CH_3)_3Cl^-$.

2. An ink-jet recording ink according to claim 1, wherein the hydrophobic group represented by R in General formula (I) is an aliphatic group or an aromatic group.

3. An ink-jet recording ink according to claim 2, wherein the hydrophobic group represented by R in General formula (I) is an alicyclic group.

4. An ink-jet recording ink according to claim 2, wherein the hydrophobic group represented by R in General formula (I) is selected from the group consisting of alkyl, alkenyl, alkynyl, phenyl and naphthyl

groups.

5. An ink-jet recording ink according to claim 4, wherein the hydrophobic group represented by R in General formula (I) is an alkyl group having 3 to 70 carbon atoms.

6. An ink-jet recording ink according to claim 1, wherein R in General formula (I) is a group derived from at least one hydrophobic polymer selected from the group consisting of polystyrene, polymethacrylic acid ester, polyacrylic acid ester, polyvinyl chloride, and derivatives thereof.

7. An ink-jet recording ink according to claim 5, wherein a polymerization degree of R in the General formula (I) is from 2 to 500.

8. An ink-jet recording ink according to claim 1, wherein the hetero bond in X in the General formula (I) is selected from the group consisting of an ether bond, an ester bond, a thioether bond, a thioester bond, a sulfonyl bond, an amide bond, an imide bond, a sulfonamide bond, a urethane bond, a urea bond, and a thiourea bond.

9. An ink-jet recording ink according to claim 1, wherein the structural unit A is a structural unit derived from vinyl alcohol, α-methylvinyl alcohol, or α-propylvinyl alcohol.

10. An ink-jet recording ink according to claim 1, wherein the structural unit B is a structural unit derived from vinyl acetate, vinyl formate, vinyl propionate, or an α-substitution product thereof.

11. An ink-jet recording ink according to claim 1, wherein the structural unit C is a structural unit derived from acrylic acid, methacrylic acid, itaconic acid, maleic acid, an ammonium salt thereof or a metal salt thereof.

12. An ink-jet recording ink according to claim 1, wherein the structural unit D is selected from the group consisting of – $CH_2CH(OH)CH_2O$-, -$CH_2C(CH_3)(OH)CH_2O$-, and -$CH_2C(C_2H_5)(OH)CH_2O$-.

13. An ink-jet recording ink according to claim 1, wherein a mass ratio of R to $(Y)_n$ in General formula (I) is from 0.01 to 2, the mass ratio being calculated using atomic weights of respective atoms in R and $(Y)_n$.

14. An ink-jet recording ink according to claim 1, wherein $(Y)_n$ in General formula (I) comprises, as a structural unit thereof, ethylene, propylene, isobutene, acrylonitrile, acrylamide, methacrylamide, N-vinylpyrrolidone, vinyl chloride or vinyl fluoride.

15. An ink-jet recording ink according to claim 1, further comprising water.

16. An ink-jet recording ink according to claim 1, further comprising an water-soluble organic solvent.

17. An ink-jet recording ink according to claim 1, further comprising a dispersing agent.

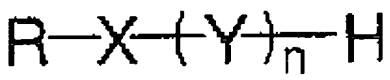
18. An ink-jet recording ink according to claim 1, further comprising a drying inhibitor.

19. An ink-jet recording ink according to claim 1, further comprising a penetration promoter.

20. An ink-jet recording ink according to claim 1, further comprising a high-boiling water-soluble solvent and a surface tension adjuster.

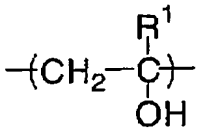
21. An ink-jet recording ink according to claim 1, which has a surface tension of 20 to 60 mN/m.

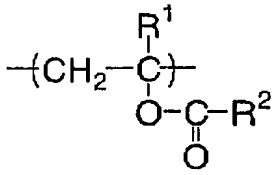
22. An image forming method, using an ink-jet recording ink comprising a pigment and a compound represented by the following General formula (I) to form an image:

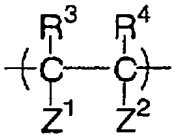


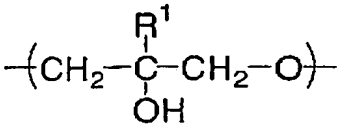
General formula (I)

wherein in General formula (I), R represents a hydrophobic group, or a group derived from a hydrophobic polymer; X represents a bivalent linking group having a hetero bond; n is an integer from 10 to 3500; and structural units of repeated Y comprise at least one structural unit represented by A, C or D, and further comprise 0 to 40% by mole of structural units represented by B:

A : 

B : 

C : 

D : 

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salt thereof or alkali metal salt thereof, or -$CONH_2$; and Z^2 represents –COOH or an ammonium salt thereof or alkali metal salt thereof, -SO_3H or an ammonium salt thereof or alkali metal salt thereof, -OSO_3H or an ammonium salt thereof or alkali metal salt thereof, -CH_2SO_3H or an ammonium salt thereof or alkali metal salt thereof, -$CONHC(CH_3)_2CH_2SO_3H$ or an ammonium salt thereof or alkali metal salt thereof, or -$CONHCH_2CH_2CH_2N^+(CH_3)_3Cl^-$.

23. An image forming method according to claim 22, wherein the hydrophobic group represented by R in General formula (I) is an aliphatic group or an aromatic group.